



## Meeting Summary September 14, 2016

### Attendance

Panel Members:	Hank Alinger, Chair Don Taylor, Vice Chair (Absent) Phil Engelke Bob Gorman Sujit Mishra Julie Wilson
DPZ Staff:	Val Lazdins, Randy Clay, George Saliba, Yvette Zhou
<b>Plan #16-013:</b>	<b>Crescent Neighborhood Area 3 – Phase 1</b>
Owner/Developer:	Howard Hughes Corporation
Architect:	JP2 Architects, TCA Architects
Landscape Architect:	Mahan Rykiel Associates Inc.
Engineer:	Daft McCune Walker

1. **Call to Order** – DAP Chair Hank Alinger opened the meeting at 7:30 pm, calling for introductions of the panel, staff and project team.

### 2. Review of Crescent Area 3 Phase 1 – DAP Plan #16-13

#### Background

The Design Advisory Panel (DAP) is required to review projects submitted as part of Downtown Columbia Revitalization. The following documents are applicable to the design review for the Crescent Area 3 neighborhood:

- ☐ The Crescent Neighborhood Design Guidelines (CNDG)
- ☐ The Crescent Neighborhood Implementation Plan
- ☐ The Crescent Neighborhood Concept Plan
- ☐ The Crescent Final Development Plan
- ☐ Crescent Neighborhood Area 3 Sketch Plan (SP-16-009)

#### Scope of Work

Mr. Jamie Pett, the lead project architect from JP2 Architects presented the project master site plan. The proposed development is located in Downtown Columbia's Crescent Neighborhood. The site is situated south of the Merriweather-Symphony Woods Neighborhood, north of Broken Land Parkway and to the west of Route 29. This site plan submittal is for Phase 1 of Crescent Area 3 neighborhood (Area 3). The submission proposes to create a new, urban and vibrant mixed-use downtown neighborhood

The neighborhood is proposed to be high density with an urban feel. Buildings will be built out to the edge of the roads to hold the street edges. The street pattern is an urban grid form. New roads are proposed including Merriweather Drive which will be built with a connection to Broken Land parkway and the North South Connector. Hickory Ridge Road will be extended and a new jug handle will be built allowing access from Route 29. Connectivity is very important throughout the project and a multi-use path is planned on north side with entrances to Merriweather and Symphony Woods. At the center of site there will be a residential component consisting of two buildings that contain 700 apartment units with ground floor retail. The ground floor retail spaces are a critical component that tie the buildings together and activate the street level. Office buildings and a parking garage are proposed for the north east quadrant of the neighborhood. A public garage, library, hotel and office tower is also planned as part of a future phase on the western side of Area 3.

Due to the large scale of the project, it will be built in phases. The residential buildings, three retail buildings and at least one office tower will be part of the first phase along with a parking garage. Per Crescent Neighborhood Guidelines, several amenities spaces are required. These amenities are important from an urban planning perspective and include the proposed Running Sun Park located at the center of the project with the idea that virtually every building touches it, and thus it serves as a keynote center for the neighborhood. The plaza area just to the south of the park would have a curb-less street controlling vehicles with decorative paving and the ability to close streets for events. The park and plaza area are designed to support events and activity. The South Crescent Promenade is a linear walkway connection from the future proposed library site to an environmental area and adjacent neighborhoods.

Mr. Scott Rykiel, Executive Vice President of Mahan Rykiel Associates, is the project's landscape architect. He described the project's streetscape, which includes street trees along the street edges and garages. Hedges will be planted around the temporary parking areas. Almost every tree pit is an ESD (bioretention facility). The plaza along the park is curb-less with special paving featuring planters and bollards with a kiosk and wood decking, soft seating, splash pad, and opportunities for public art. The park lawn steps down 15 inches below grade which helps with containing children's activity and is also good for music/movie events as it will act as a natural amphitheater allowing multi-use purpose. In the winter it can accommodate ice rinks and holiday events. The promenade (24 ft. wide) is an amenity space, which provides connection to Area 2 and opportunities to host events. The park's furnishings provide a contemporary look and feel with cushion seating and tree plantings to separate it from traffic.

In the plaza area adjacent to Building A, there is a turnaround zone that allows cars, but based on the design of paving and materials, it is meant more as a pedestrian zone. The plaza will be off of Merriweather Drive and will have contemporary benches, bike racks, movable seating, recycling cans, and contemporary LED lighting. Street plantings throughout the area feature a mixture of trees to avoid monoculture plantings. ESD's are proposed throughout.

Mr. Pett stated the first office building will be constructed at the intersection of Merriweather Drive and the North South Connector. This is a signature office tower that will be a gateway building serving as an entry point to the neighborhood. The second office building on Prism Way would come as part of a later portion of phase 1. Both office towers will have walk through lobbies. The office buildings are thought of as sister buildings that are 14 stories and 12 stories in height stepping down towards the residential buildings at the core. The buildings are still in development in terms of design since no tenant is signed yet. The office buildings are envisioned to have a combination of curtain wall and precast materials on the exterior.

A 2,500 space public car garage that services the office buildings and general public is proposed along the North South Connector. The garage is located to serve both the office buildings and Merriweather Post Pavilion.

Mr. Irwin Yau from TCA, the project's second architect, presented the design of the residential mixed-use buildings (B & C). These buildings were designed to be very active, pedestrian oriented and connected to their surroundings. The Building B north elevation responds to Symphony Woods and Merriweather Post Pavilion. The balcony design gives the feel of block seats during musical events. The architecture of the

north side of Building B is like a musical theme where the balconies move up & down in elevation like musical notes. The south building (Building C) focuses attention on making connection to park. The south side of Building B is oriented to the park and central plaza. A warmer material palette was selected with wood colors and brick. The ground level has 50,000 sf of retail and restaurant space, 57 parking spaces for retail & guests and dedicated entrances for the public and residents. The garage is mostly hidden from view as it is wrapped by the building.

DAP member Ms. Julie Wilson asked about service areas for this building and Mr. Yau confirmed there is a dedicated area for service vehicles. Building B has 6 levels of about 300 residential units featuring a mix of studios, 1, 2, and 3 bedrooms and 10,000 sf of amenity space. A courtyard and pool are located on the podium level including clubroom, fitness, and game rooms with the garage embedded into the architecture.

Building C has a roof deck creating a dynamic roofline. The corners of the building are emphasized. The north elevation responds to the park and central plaza area. The eastern elevation responds to the future phase office tower. The ground level has 38,000 sf of retail. The upper level has 423 units including a mix of studio, 1, 2, and 3 bedroom room units. The unit sizes are smaller for this building. There are two courtyards, one is active and the other is intended to be more passive.

Smaller retail buildings are designed to engage the central park amenity area. These include an anchor retail use, a 2-story retail use and a kiosk fronting the park.

Mr. Pett presented an animated flythrough of the Area 3 neighborhood showing different perspectives and design features.

DAP Chair Hank Alinger directed staff to present its comments on the project. DPZ staff Mr. George Saliba provided a brief summary of staff comments concerning urban design, street & sidewalk design, architecture and amenity spaces in the context of the Crescent Neighborhood Design guidelines:

1. DPZ recommends the applicant review setbacks.
2. DPZ recommends that the DAP reviews and critiques the proposed service entrance area and discusses alternatives that meet the design requirements and intent of the signature building and high profile location in order to avoid a repeat of the building under construction in Crescent Area 1 that includes service access off Broken Land Parkway.
3. DPZ recommends that the DAP request the applicant look at the cul-de-sac turnaround area between Building A1 and A2 as it relates to the pedestrian plaza as there are vehicles that are being proposed for a pedestrian secondary amenity space.
4. DPZ recommends that the DAP request the applicant provide more details on the lower level parking.
5. DPZ recommends that the DAP request the applicant discuss the interim condition of open surface lots/parking lots for Phase 1 including further details on how the interim parcels will be graded, paved, landscaped, screened, lighted and maintained.
6. DPZ recommends that DAP review the pedestrian zone throughout the neighborhood. In many instances, the pedestrian area is competing with ESD's and the building footprint. The neighborhood design guidelines call for a minimum 6 foot pedestrian zone. There appear to be pedestrian pinch points throughout the neighborhood.
7. DPZ recommends that the DAP provide feedback on potential landscaping, lighting, signage, and street furnishing options to the applicant for the proposed phase 1 development.
8. DPZ recommends that the DAP request the applicant provide additional information on the overall provision and the project's urban parking strategy including what the on-street parking strategy is.
9. DPZ recommends that the DAP review and critique the Merriweather Drive street and sidewalk frontage along Building B (Parcel D-2) and how this will function for pedestrians, residents, vehicles and other site design considerations.
10. DPZ recommends that the DAP engage the applicant in a discussion on the project's overall treatment of the pedestrian zone. Given its adjacency to the active Merriweather-Symphony Woods Neighborhood, and planned density of this downtown neighborhood, a dialogue on increasing sidewalk width beyond the minimum requirement may be necessary.

11. DPZ recommends that the DAP discuss the proposed signature office building's façade fronting Merriweather Drive and the North South Connector. What does DAP feel is appropriate for this signature building?
12. DPZ recommends that the DAP evaluate the proposed garage along the North South Connector behind Building A1 (parcel D-3) and discuss appropriate architectural design elements, materials and screening at this location and how the design of this garage relates to the adjacent signature building (A1) as well as its frontage along the North South Connector. DPZ staff wants to achieve a better result here than what was achieved with the utilitarian garage at Crescent Area 1.
13. DPZ recommends that the DAP discuss the primary amenity spaces and request the applicant to consider delaying the design of the South Crescent Promenade and trail to Area 2 and Hickory Ridge Road until a future phase when the adjacent parcels are submitted for review so that the promenade can be configured in a way that best aligns with this future development.
14. DPZ recommends that the DAP evaluate the location(s) and design elements of potential connections from Area 3 across Merriweather Drive to the multi-use path, Symphony Woods, and Merriweather Post Pavilion and discuss additional locations. How many connection points should there be and what should they look like?

DAP Chair Mr. Hank Alinger stated that he felt it was a thoughtful overall plan but he wanted to talk about edge conditions. Mr. Alinger asked about the garage on the east side of the development along the North South Connector and what the edge treatment would be on both sides of this garage. He also asked the applicant to talk more about the service entrance off the North South Connector as it is very reminiscent of what happened with the service entry off Broken Land Parkway in Crescent Area 1.

Mr. Pett stated that the garage will have approximately 2,500 spaces. He stated that there isn't a sidewalk on the west side of the garage because people can simply cross the street to walk to other locations and thus the sidewalk area directly abutting the west side of the garage can be used for stormwater management ESD's. In terms of the service area, there is a significant grade change going from west to east along Merriweather Drive. The corner where the service entry area is proposed is at a low elevation. A service vehicle can enter and use a loading dock turnaround underneath the building. This was the most discrete area the design team felt the service area could be located. With regards to the lower level parking, there will be a small area exclusively for executive parking for the future tenant that is gate controlled and will be accessed through the parking garage. Mr. Pett concurred that it was exceptionally important that the façade of the garage be treated in an architectural manner that shows its importance, especially along the face that fronts the North South Connector. He stated that the garage is not currently designed.

Mr. Alinger asked about crossings along Merriweather Drive. Mr. Pett stated that the design team agreed that there should be more crossings but they didn't want to design them until they knew where all of the signalized crossings on Merriweather Drive would be located with full build out.

Mr. Pett showed on-street parking on the presentation slide and stated that it was not feasible to put on-street parking near intersections due to safety concerns of traffic passing. There are about 50 on street spaces currently proposed. There are 57 parking spaces in Building B and 120 in Building C garages that will be publically available.

Ms. Wilson asked why there was so much surface parking and whether it was all needed.

Ms. Ruth Hoang from Howard Hughes Corporation said this was part of a strategy to have land uses of temporary parking that could be developed as future building sites once agreements were made.

Mr. Pett stated that once all of Phase 1 was built out there would be the need for more parking than what is proposed for the Phase 1 garage and that it didn't make sense to build the Phase 2 garage because that amount of parking wasn't needed and it could be 3 or 10 years before the future building sites were developed. Ms. Hoang stated that the Phase 1 parking garage on the east side of Area 3 wouldn't be built right away and that the surface lots would be needed to serve the retail as part of Phase 1 until the garage was built. Ms. Hoang stated that a 2,500 car garage wouldn't be built until the Phase 1 office tower had a lead tenant and was constructed. In the interim, the surface lots would serve the retail.

Mr. Alinger asked how the retail will be phased. Ms. Hoang said it will be part of Phase 1.

Ms. Wilson stated that the surface parking lots were fairly brutal with little design thought. She stated that the temporary lots have no trees or bioretention. Mr. Pett stated that it was hard to justify spending the money for landscaping and bioretention that might be removed in 3 years.

Ms. Wilson stated that planting trees in the lots was not a financial burden. Mr. Alinger stated that for a project of this size, tree plantings in the parking lots is justifiable and the trees could be relocated once the surface lots are developed. DAP member Mr. Bob Gorman stated that the amount of time that constitutes temporary was dependent on the market and that these lots could be here a long time and thus tree planting was warranted.

DAP member Mr. Phil Engelke stated that in Maple Lawn there is a sea of parking that was built in anticipation of future development that hasn't fully come yet and it is not aesthetically pleasing and he does not want to see the same thing occur here.

Mr. Gorman stated that a large part of DAP's concern about parking and parking garages had to do with the garage in Crescent Area 1 and the negative feedback DAP members have received from the community.

Mr. Gorman stated that the side of the garage in Phase 1 looms like a large aircraft carrier and asked if a floor to a floor and a half of a green wall could be included for the west side of the garage. Mr. Alinger and Ms. Wilson stated that they agreed this parking garage wall needs some type of softening and screening.

Ms. Wilson stated that she felt the project was fabulous and one of the most important projects in Columbia and that it has to be done right. Ms. Wilson noted that there was not good connectivity on the street identified as Scarlett Begonia's Way. Ms. Wilson did not feel it drew people into the public park area and needed more street trees and pedestrian amenities.

Mr. Pett stated that these streets did have street trees and a pedestrian zone at full build-out but the temporary condition had a different treatment.

Mr. Gorman stated that he was in favor of sacrificing some on-street parking if it enabled more street trees.

Mr. Alinger asked if some of the ESD's could allow for pairs of streets trees. Mr. Rykiel responded that extra trees might impede the visibility of the retail signage on the ground floor.

Mr. Valdis Lazdins, Director of the Department of Planning and Zoning, pointed out that staff had noted locations where the sidewalk pedestrian zone was six foot wide or less in some locations due to ESD's. Mr. Lazdins asked the DAP panel to consider the pinch points.

Mr. Alinger stated that 6-foot wide pedestrian zone seemed tight and that 8 foot wide would be preferable.

Mr. Rykiel stated that in most cases there is a two foot building frontage zone and a 2-foot step off zone and that with the building frontage there was really an 8-foot pedestrian zone in most areas where it appears there is only six feet.

Mr. Gorman also asked if the Merriweather Drive intersections will have signals. Mr. Pett stated that on the east end there will be a signal and that there is potential for additional signals.

Mr. Gorman stated that there is an opportunity for a grand pedestrian crossing above and beyond a standard crosswalk going across Merriweather Drive.

Mr. Gorman stated that on many plans, there is a focus on vehicles and not pedestrians and that the core of this area has a good focus on pedestrians but that the two north south streets that connect across Merriweather Drive (Dove Sail Lane and Prism Way) should have a more pedestrian focus.

Mr. Gorman stated the frontage area in front of Building B along Merriweather Drive also needs more attention and design detail.

DAP member, Mr. Sujit Mishra, stated that he felt the design team did a great job. He asked why the plaza and park area was located between the two residential buildings isolated from the office buildings. He also stated that people driving along the perimeter would not know the park and green space were there but that if the park area was flipped in terms of orientation, it could be felt and seen by more people.

Mr. Mishra also stated that architecturally, it would be good to see precedents as to where the design for the glass office tower is coming from. He stated that saying it will be modern does not provide enough detail in terms of the architectural style for the office buildings.

Mr. Pett stated that locating the park area where it was proposed was a conscious decision and that he respectfully disagreed with Mr. Mishra. He stated that the high rise office tower was 14 stories high and the park would be visible from the upper floors. Mr. Pett stated that orienting the park from north to south made it leak out to a road and it would lose some of its character and that by orienting it east to west as was shown in the presentation, it could be in close proximity to more buildings.

Mr. Gorman asked where the library would be located and how big it would be. Mr. Pett showed the location on the site plan and stated that the proposed building would be approximately 20,000 sf per floor and that the library would likely take up multiple floors. Mr. Gorman stated that this would be a very important site considering that the library is to be located here.

Ms. Wilson stated that the garage behind residential Building C needs to be screened since it will be visible. Ms. Wilson stated that she did not want to see a pre cast structure coming off of Route 29 and Broken Land Parkway.

Mr. Pett stated that the design team is studying this area and that there is a tree stand that provides some screening.

Ms. Wilson stated that currently she can see a big sign in this location and therefore it is visible and needs to be treated appropriately. Mr. Pett agreed that a portion of it would be visible.

Mr. Engelke stated that in picturing the parking garages at night, they need to be designed to prevent light leakage.

Ms. Wilson reiterated that the garages need to be intentionally designed since they are such a visible part of the project.

Mr. Engelke stated his concern that downtown Columbia's usage of different graphic style signs is not necessarily in line with the design guidelines and that downtown Columbia is seeing a plethora of different styles.

Mr. Pett stated that he disagrees to some extent and that each downtown node is unique and should have graphic signage to reflect each character similar to neighborhoods in Baltimore such as Hampden and Harbor East that have their own unique look and style.

Mr. Engelke stated that in some places in downtown the scale is so different and while he agrees the style and look does not need to be exactly the same in each downtown area but that the design guidelines should be followed as they provide a good basis for design. He stated that he felt there should be some standardization especially for things like street signs.

Mr. Alinger stated that at the very least, the Crescent neighborhood should have uniform design standards for signage.

Mr. Engelke stated that the downtown is small and that it doesn't make sense to have different styles for signage two minutes apart.

Ms. Wilson stated that she strongly agreed with staff comments about the plaza area not allowing vehicles.

Mr. Pett said the design team met with the fire department and it was designed with a concern for allowing emergency vehicles to get as close to the buildings as possible and allow a turnaround area.

Ms. Wilson asked if the area was just for emergency vehicles.

Mr. Pett stated that in addition to emergency vehicles, it would be allowed as a vehicle drop off and turnaround.

Mr. Gorman asked what design elements would make it a pedestrian area.

Mr. Pett stated that it would be a raised intersection with special paving and bollards.

Mr. Lazdins stated that he would have further discussion with the fire chief to see if this area was absolutely necessary for emergency vehicles.

Mr. Gorman stated that he felt it could function allowing both pedestrians and vehicles for drop-offs.

Ms. Wilson stated that she felt it was a concern to allow non-emergency vehicles into this area.

Ms. Wilson recommended reducing parking area in the temporary parking along Prism Way area by adding trees or benches to enhance the pedestrian walkway and experience.

During the motions portion of the meeting, Mr. Lazdins posed the question to the DAP members as to what the sidewalk frontage area should look like along Merriweather Drive in front of Building B considering the density in this location.

Mr. Pett stated that minimum sidewalk areas were met in this area and that there were constraints with the curve of the road falling in the area along Merriweather Drive directly in front of Building B.

Mr. Yau stated that he felt the majority of people would come into the building from the garage.

Mr. Yau stated that there was an elevation break in this area where the leasing office is located versus where the retail is located. He stated there was a break in the architecture.

Mr. Gorman stated that the podium area of Building B along Merriweather Drive seemed alien as compared to the rest of the building and it looked like it had a strange ground plane.

Mr. Yau stated that they grouped types of store fronts instead of having a homogenous look for retail storefronts.

Mr. Engelke asked if there was an overhang along the retail store frontage on Merriweather Drive – Building B.

Mr. Yau stated that there was not an overhang but there was an awning.

Mr. Gorman stated that it seemed with the retail, people would want to stop and get out of their car along Merriweather and that this was one of the toughest segments along the project.

Mr. Pett stated that this was not the intention and that Merriweather Drive was not suitable for vehicles stopping.

**The DAP adopted the following recommendations for the project. These recommendations will be forwarded to the Planning Board.**

DAP member Phil Engelke made the following motion:

1. "I recommend that you think very seriously about the exterior of the parking garages and that includes the exposure to Broken Land Parkway." Seconded by DAP member Bob Gorman.

Vote: 5-0 to approve

DAP member Phil Engelke made the following motion:

2. "I recommend that the graphics and signage be coordinated with Crescent Neighborhood Design Guidelines." Seconded by DAP Chair Hank Alinger.

Vote: 5-0 to approve

DAP Member Bob Gorman made the following motion:

3. "When you do your final master plan, you show something over there (the area across Merriweather Drive) that accomplishes bringing that area into the longer term plan for this development." Seconded by DAP member Phil Engelke.

Vote: 5-0 to approve

DAP Member Julie Wilson made the following motion:

4. "I recommend adding trees and plantings to soften the surface parking lots." Seconded by DAP member Phil Engelke.

Vote: 5-0 to approve

DAP Member Bob Gorman made the following motion:

5. "Recommend applicant to add more trees on Prism Way." Seconded by DAP member Julie Wilson.

Vote: 5-0 to approve

DAP member Julie Wilson made the following motion:

6. "Recommends applicant study Prism Way to make it more of a pedestrian access and give it some importance and make it feel walkable. Look at eliminating some spaces in the parking lot so that you can provide plantings and benches for places to sit." Seconded by DAP Chair Hank Alinger.

Vote: 5-0 to approve



DAP member Julie Wilson made the following motion:

7. "Applicant should go back and study how the retail in particular integrates with the rest of the façade on Merriweather." Seconded by DAP member Phil Engelke.

Vote: 5-0 to approve

**3. Call to Adjourn**

DAP Chair Mr. Hank Alinger adjourned the meeting at 9:23pm.